



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

MITT ROMNEY
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

November 8, 2004

Dear Patient Safety Leader:

I am writing to invite you to a historic conference to be held on December 2, 2004. The first annual Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety and Medical Error Reduction Symposium will commemorate two major events in the patient safety movement, and is co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors, Massachusetts Medical Society and the Massachusetts Hospital Association.

Ten years ago this December, the death of Betsy Lehman from a chemotherapy overdose became one of the most widely publicized medical errors in the United States. Five years later the Institute of Medicine issued its historic report *To Err is Human*. This report estimated that 45,000-98,000 Americans die in hospitals each year from similar errors. One response to this report was a dedication of over \$50 million by the federal government through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to carry out patient safety research from 2001-2004. Ten of these projects were actually conducted here in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts has long been the leader in this movement. After the tragic case of Ms. Lehman at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, that hospital, along with hospitals and health care providers all over the Commonwealth, came together with state regulatory agencies, academia and other leaders in the health care industry to work together to find solutions in this area. One of the successes of this movement has been the establishment of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors (Coalition) and the passage of legislation that established the Betsy Lehman Patient Safety Center. Since 1997, the work of the Coalition has helped institutions to establish best practices aimed at preventing errors and fostering safer health care. Originally championed by Senator Richard T. Moore, the Center has begun promoting best practices and assisting consumers with navigating the health care system. This summer, the Center convened an expert panel on weight loss surgery, which issued a first in the nation report on safe practices for weight loss surgery. Future goals of the center include coordinating the patient safety efforts of state agencies and promoting consumer participation in the patient safety movement.

At this first Betsy Lehman Center Symposium, we will hear from a number of experts in the area, including Senator Moore, Commissioner Ferguson, Massachusetts's physicians and hospitals, and Betsy Lehman's mother, Mildred Lehman who will speak to the importance of this issue for patients and families as well as for the healthcare community. The basic agenda for this conference will include the presentations from several of the Massachusetts projects funded through the AHRQ Patient Safety Portfolio.

I hope that you will be able to join us for this important event. While there is no fee for attending this conference, advance registration is required due to space limitations. A copy of the agenda and registration materials are attached to this letter. For additional information, please contact Catherine Annas (Catherine.Annas@state.ma.us), Karen Granoff (Karen.Granoff@state.ma.us) or Nancy Ridley (Nancy.Ridley@state.ma.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nancy Ridley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nancy" and last name "Ridley" clearly distinguishable.

Nancy Ridley, M.S.,
Assistant Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Director, Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety and Medical Error Reduction